CHAPTER - I

LOCATION OF THE PANDYA
- OR PARAVA COAST
Tamilaham, literally meaning "the home of the Tamil language", is the land where the Tamils, who speak the Tamil language, live from time immemorial. The terms Tamilar and Tamilaham are therefore the logical sequences of the term Tamil. ¹ Tamilaham, otherwise called the Tamil Land or the Tamil Country, was for sometimes called the Madras State in the recent past. The Madras State formed a part of the previous Madras Presidency, which comprised of the Madras State proper, southern parts of Orissa, the present Andhra Pradesh, the southern parts of Karnataka, and the Malabar region, which now forms a part of the Kerala State. According to the Central Government's decision of the Reorganization of States on linguistic basis, the predominantly Tamil-speaking area was carved out from the erstwhile Madras Presidency and thus the post-independent Madras State was formed.²

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2. B.Maria John, Linguistic Reorganization of Madras Presidency, Nagercoil, 1994, pp.144-146.

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But, according to a State Government’s Order, the erstwhile Madras State was renamed as Tamil Nadu in 1967. The present Tamil Nadu is situated in the South-eastern corner of the Indian Peninsula (called the Bharatvarsha or 'the Jambudvipa'). The State lies between $8^\circ 5'$ and $13^\circ 35'$ north latitudes and $76^\circ 15'$ and $80^\circ 20'$ east longitudes and is bordered on the east by a long sea-coast called the Coromandel Coas\textsuperscript{-}t (Cholamandala Kadarkarai) in the Bay of Bengal and on the south by the Indian Ocean; on the west by the States of Kerala and Karnataka and on the north by Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The present Tamil Nadu with an area of 1,30,058 square kilometres is spatially the eleventh largest State in India. At present it consists of twenty four districts and its headquarters is at Chennai on the Coromandel Coast. According to the 1991 census, the total population of Tamil Nadu was 55,638,000 of which 28,218,000 were males and 27,420,000 were females. Though Tamil is the official language of the State, a good chunk of the population


4. The total population of Tamil Nadu at present may be around six crores / 6,00,00,000.
speak other languages like Malayalam, Telugu, Canarese, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and Sourastra. The Hindus constitute the largest majority of the population. The Christians and Muslims are the other major religious groups of the State.  

ANCIENT BOUNDS OF TAMILAHAM

Ancient Tamilaham was situated to the south of the Mysore Plateau in the north and north-west and the Tirupati hills in the north-east. 6 The limits of the then Tamilaham were from Thiruveñkatam in the north (the Veñkatam hill is the modern Tirupati about 100 miles (160 K.M) north-east of Chennai-Madras) to Thenkumari in the south and from Kunakadal (Bay of Bengal) in the east to the Kudakadal (Arabean Sea) in the west. 7 In the Saṅgam literature, the 'Bay of Bengal' is referred to as Todukadal meaning "the sea that was artificially created by digging", whereas the Arabean Sea is referred to as "Tonrumutirpouvam", meaning the ancient Tamil sea that has been

6. V.Kanakasabhai Pillai, op.cit., p.3.
in existence from the days of the creation of the world. 8 The Sanskrit word Sağara was specially applied to the Bay of Bengal, as it was supposed to have been dug up by 60,000 "Sons of the Sağara". 9 In those times Tamil was spoken from the eastern to the western sea. 10

EASTERN COAST

The eastern sea has always been stormy and, therefore, inhospitable. This region, as it is now, 11 was frequently rocked by destructive cyclones resulting in heavy loss of lives and properties to the land. Very recently made off-shore and


10. V.Kanakasabhai Pillai, op.cit., p.9.

11 A high velocity 'super cyclone' hit the Orissa state on October 29, 1999 and has done irreparable damage to men and property and life was paralised. More than 5,000 people are feared dead. (see The Hindu, November 2, 1999).
under-water investigations corroborate the view of the loss of Puhar, which is now found to have been located five kms into the sea. The Tambraparni, also known as Porunai, Ann Porunai, Than Porunai, Tambapanni or Taprobane, the perennial river, originates from the slopes of the Podiyilmalai or Agastyalalai (80°37'N, 77°15'E) in the Western Ghats. It traverses through the Tirunelveli and the Thūththukudi Districts. Before the bifurcation of the Tirunelveli District, it was said to be the only river which started and ended in the same district. After reaching the Pāpanāsam falls (five in number) and running in an easterly direction, the river flows into the Gulf of Mannar. Its tributaries are the Chitra and the Manimutharu. It derives its

12. Manimekhalai, XXII, 1.37.

13. By Toprabane the Greek geographer appears to have meant the land south of the Tambraparni river, particularly Ceylon. [K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, Age of the Nandas and Mauryas, 2nd (ed.), Delhi, 1967, p.43].

14. This hill is said to be the abode of the great sage Agastiyar, from whom, according to local traditions, Tamil was born. This has been variously called Agastiyakutam, Podikai, Podiyomalai, Podiga hill and Podiyam and in North Indian literatures as Potalagiri, Potalaka, etc. and the sage as Podiyin mamuni [Shu Hikosaka, Buddhism in Tamilnadu: A New Perspective, Madras, 1989, pp.181-198].

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waters from both the South-west and the North-east monsoons and hence its flow is almost perennial. Dams have been constructed across the river at various places for utilization of its water for irrigation. On its mouth was located Korkai on the Gulf of Mannar. Here was located the Pearl-fishery Coast or the Parava Coast within the traditional Pandyan Kingdom. It was located south of the river Vennar flowing through Pudukottai, and north of Kanyakumari, east of the Western Ghats and west of the Bay of Bengal. It included the erstwhile districts of Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli and parts of the present Pudukottai and Coimbatore districts. Madurai on the Vaigai river was its capital city and Korkai and Saliyur were its famous port towns. Southern coastal area was called Paralia, which is the coast line below the Travancore back-waters, around Kanyakumari and as far as Adam's bridge, which comprised the modern districts of Trivandrum and Tirunelveli.

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PARAVA COAST

Located within the Pandyan Kingdom, the Parava Coast or the Pearl-fishery Coast is situated in the Then Pandi Nadu (Southern division of the Pandya Country). The Pandyas had their earliest capital at Then Madurai ("Southern Madurai") which was engulfed by the roaring sea. Then they shifted their capital to Kapātapuram, i.e., the Kautilyan-fame Pandya Kavatake, which had been decorated with the Pandyan pearls, fished from that region itself.¹⁷

KAPĀTAPURAM

Pandya Kavata is referred to in the Rāmayana, which is said to have been composed before the seventh century B.C. According to the Rāmayana story, when Sugrīva had been asked by his Vanara men to locate the place of Sita in Sri Lanka, he informed them that they would come across Dandakarānyā, after having crossed the Vindhya–Satpura ranges and the Narmada–Godavari rivers. He again said to them that they would cross

Then they would search for the Ayomukhamalai (Malaya Malai - Kudagumalai). Thereafter they would see the beautiful Kaviri. On the peak of Malaya Malai, they would see the great Agastya, who was the venerable one like the Sun. Having met him and got his blessings, they would cross the Tambraparni river which was full of crocodiles. The river banks were full of sandalwood trees and groves giving gentle shadow and the river joins the sea just like a lovely wife joining her husband. Then they would see Kavate of the Pandyas, decorated with gold, pearls and other gems, giving a very lovely scenic beauty. Then they would reach the ocean and search for Sita. These places, mountains and rivers were parts of the Dandakaranya, in which there were no people nor any life, for thousand Yojanas from the foot of the

Vindhya. It gave the appearance of a desert. Agastya is said to have peopled this area and made it fit for human living. 21

After having described the origin, flow and joining of the river Tambraparni with the sea, Valmikhi describes the scenic beauty of Kavāte, the capital of the Pāndyas. It is therefore said that the city of Kavātapuram was on the mouth of the Tambraparni river. Tilakar, Thirtha, and Govindaraja, the Commentators of Valmikhi Rāmāyana interpret the passage to mean that the Vanara men would see the beautifully decorated entrance

21. Even the myth about Parasurama says that he created the Kerala country by throwing his malu (ax). These traditions refer to one fact i.e., the colonizing of the South by the Brahmins of the North. This is in no way true, that they had alone peopled the regions. They perhaps would have established Brahmin colonies. From what we get from the early Saṅgam works about the physiographic divisions of Tamil land, its people and their occupations, we may not be far away from the truth that these regions were peopled with tribals such as the Vēduvar, Kuravar, Villavar, Kurumbar, Idaiyar, Ūrār, Ulavar, Paratavar, Maravar, Nāgar, etc. Had Agastya and Parasurama peopled the South, they would have done so with these peoples only. [M. Ragavaiyengar, op.cit., p.7].

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gate of Kavatapuram within its fortifications. It is believed that this Pandya capital of Kavatapuram was the seat of the second Saṅgam. In Cilappadikāram's Urai Pāyiram (preface to commentary), it has been mentioned as the place engulfed by the 'second deluge'. According to it Kavatapuram was the capital of Nilamtharuthiruvin Pāndyan. What we infer from Vālmikī's reference and the Commentators' interpretations is that Kavatapuram (Pāndya Kavāte) was the capital of the Pāndyas; it was on the mouth of the Tambraparni river; it was the seat of the second Saṅgam; and it was full of pearls, as pearls originate from this place. So we have the reference to pearls recorded in Sanskrit literature, particularly in Vālmikī Rāmāyana, even in the 7th century B.C. The Pāndya capital city after its destruction was renamed as Korkai.

MADURAI AS CAPITAL

Again, the Pāndyas had to shift their capital from Korkai to the present Madurai (9°55'N, 78°7'E) on the Vaigai river bed at the time of Pāndyan Mudathirumāran. Once Madurai, the inland capital became safe, the Pāndyas had their secondary

22. Ibid., p.8.
23. Ibid., p.10.
coastal capital at Korkai. Korkai, the sea-port city of the Pandyas, became very busy in inter-continental trade mainly owing to pearl-fishing. The Pandyas seem to have made the crown prince stay at Korkai and look after the pearl-fishing and commercial contacts. Sañgam works substantiate this view.

When Ariyappadai Kadantha Nedunchelian died on realizing that he had faulted justice by ordering the killing of Kovalan, Vetriver Cheliyan rushed from Korkai to Madurai to crown himself as the Pandyya ruler. On ascending the throne, Vetriver Cheliyan is said to have committed one thousand goldsmiths of Madurai to killing, for expiation of the sin of his predecessor.

THE PANCHA PANDYAS

In addition, there is also a view that the Pandyas were five in number, and therefore, were called Pancha Pandyas. These Pancha Pandyas are referred to in literature and

27. Ibid., XIV. 90.
inscriptions. An inscription of the time of Kulōttuṅga I says that the Chōla monarch won a great victory against the Pāṇḍya Pāṇḍyasa. 29 They are said to have had their royal thrones at Madurai, Thenkāsi, Kayattār, Korkai and Mānāmadurai. 30 Thenkāsi, Kayattār and Korkai were within the Then Pāṇḍi Nādu, i.e. the erstwhile Tirunelveli region. The Korkai coastal belt or the Parava Coast had thus become famous as a seat of the Pāṇḍya royal power. According to Ptolemy's Korkai was situated at 20° north of the estuary of river Sōlen. 31

PĀṇDYAS OF FIRST EMPIRE

During the first Pāṇḍya rule (C. 575-990 A.D.), the Parava Coast grew as a powerful seat of the Paravas (Paratavar). The Paravas are said to have consolidated their power and opposed the Pāṇḍya sway over this region. The Pāṇḍya ruler, Nedunchezhiyan was a great conqueror and he had to wrest power from the Paravas by declaring a war. The Paravas gave stubborn resistance to the

Pāndya. But, after a protracted war, he wrested the region from the Paravas and styled himself as the 'victor of the Paravas'. This coastal region of the Pāndyas under the First Pāndya Emperors also rose to great prominence because of the boon of the pearl-fishing which attracted the attention of foreign traders from time immemorial.

GULF OF MĀNNĀR

This coast extended from Thondi in the north-east to Kanyakumari in the south, covering a coastal area of 250 kms and as far as the Ādam's bridge near Rāmēswaram. Ahanānūru, the Saṅgam work, mentions about Maruṅgūrpattinam, a port city in Ramnad district and it was otherwise known as Saliyur which became the second port city of the Pāndyas. It is said to have been situated between Korkai in the South and Thondi in the North. The Pāndya territory ran along the Coromandel Coast on

the east and from Quilon to Kanyakumari on the West Coast. With Ceylon under their sway, the Gulf of Mannar became a Pandyan territorial waters, the beds of which were explored by them for pearl-fishing. According to the Tamil poet Maṅgudi Marudan, the whole of this littoral region derives its chief celebrity from pearl-fishing which is carried on by its inhabitants, the Paravas. The Paravas have lived on this shore as fishers and

35. The coastal belt from Pamban to Tuticorin is popularly called the Gulf of Mannar, where there are a large number of (21) small coral reef islands like Kurusadi Thivu, Muyal Thivu, Appat-Thivu, Nalla Thanneer Thivu; of them Muyal Thivu in the Keezhakarai sea is of 129 hectares area. Around these islands are found Dukong (sea cow), Dolphin, sea horse, and large varieties of herbal fossils (plants) besides many other living creatures. The coral reef island near Tuticorin, which appeared very recently, is called Puthu Thivu (the New Island). It was discovered only last year (1998). Another coral reef island has made its appearance in the Keezhakarai Bharathi Nagar near the Appat Thivu (Father Island). (Dina Mani, Madurai, July 2, 1999). The newly found island is expected to grow into a five hectare area in the next few years. In the Keezhakarai - sea there are the 'Good Water Island', 'Thalaiyari Island', Valait Thivu, and Manoli Thivu.

pearl-divers. The missionaries of the Madura Mission say that they were the most powerful people. They were under the Pandyan kings and were enjoying special rights and privileges. Comari or Comaria as mentioned by Ptolemy in his Geography and the anonymous author of the Periplus Maris Erythraea is nothing but Kumari or Then Kumari, i.e. the Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari). It is the southernmost extremity of the Indian Peninsula (8°5'N, 77°E) and also the southern extremity of the Pandya Coast. Its name is supposed to have come from the Sanskritised form of Komari, the 'Virgin', thereby attributing to its sacredness, as the 'Virgin Goddess' Parvati, the consort of Siva, is said to have her abode there. This story became very popular by the beginning of the first century A.D. Kanyakumari as a pilgrim

37. Maduraik-kanchi of Maṅgudi Marudan, one of the Ten Idyls, collectively called Pattupattu, speaks of the greatness and valour of the Pandyan King Nedunchezhiyan who ruled about 2nd Century A.D. It talks of Paravas as a war-like race and they had the priceless pearls dived for them. (Maduraik-kanchi, 11.96-98, 135-8.)


centre is referred to in the Periplus, which states that pilgrims used to come to Comori to have bath in the sacred sea to wash off their sins. 40 Again, Manimekhalai speaks of one Sāli, who is said to have committed the sin of incest without knowing the identity of the partner and given birth to a son. Realizing her sin, she went on a pilgrimage from the North to South and had a dip in the sacred sea and thus washed off her sin. 41 There is also yet one more view that Kumari had derived its name from a Zerophyte called Comari, which appears to have been in abundance once in this place. It has been classified in Siddha herbal system as Cheñkomari (red), Veñkomari (white) and Paiñkomari (green). 42

PEARL-FISHING IN OTHER PLACES

Claudius Aelien, who flourished about the middle of the second century A.D., refers to a city which a man of royal

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40. V. Kanakasabhai Pillai, op. cit., p. 115.
41. Manimekhalai, 50: 3.
extraction called Sōras (identified as Colas)\textsuperscript{43} governed at the time when Eukratides governed the Bactrians, and the name of that city was Perimuda, which has been identified as Perimula as mentioned by Pliny as an Indian promontory and important centre of trade with a pearl-fishery on its coast.\textsuperscript{44} This Perimula, however, is situated on the West Coast and has been identified with Simylla (Tesamula), now known as Chaw, twenty-three miles south of Mumbai (Bombay).\textsuperscript{45} The Perimula of Aelien, however, must be located somewhere on or near the more southern portion of the Coromandel Coast. Ptolemy and the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea mention a place called Kolkhōi as an emporium of pearl trade. It was the original seat of the Pāndya dynasty and was situated in Tūthhukudi district on the mouth of river Tambraparni. According to Ptolemy, Colchi was situated 123° east longitude and 15° north latitude. River Sōlen and its estuary

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{43} Robert Caldwell, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, Introduction, (Reprint), Madras, 1956, p.70.
\item \textsuperscript{44} John W. Mc Crindle, Ancient India as Described in Classical Literature, first Indian edition, New Delhi, 1879, p.136.
\item \textsuperscript{45} P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar, History of the Tamils, Madras, 1929, p.110.
\end{itemize}
were situated 123° east and 14°40' north.\textsuperscript{46} Kolkhōi is said to have derived its name from the Tamil root kol meaning to buy and became an important emporium of the time. By tradition that was the earliest seat of Dravidian power in Southern India, where Chera, Chōla and Pāndya, the legendary progenitors of the grand dynasties ruled in common before their dominions were separated.\textsuperscript{47} It has been identified by some scholars with Kavātapuram of Sanskrit literature. Kavātapuram or Pāndya-Kavātam is mentioned in the Arthasastra\textsuperscript{48} as a place where pearls could be obtained. Thus it is identified with Colchi of the Periplus. The Ramayana\textsuperscript{49} also refers to Kapāta-Pāndyanām, while Mahābhārata\textsuperscript{50} speaks of Bhinne Kapāta-Pāndyanām. At the time of the composition of the Periplus, Kavātapuram was one of the chief ports of the Pāndyan Kingdom, being more accessible to the capital. Owing to the deposit of silt by the Tambraparni river, the sea retired from

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\item \textsuperscript{46} V.S.V.Raghavan, Ptolemy, (Tl.), Madras, 1978, p.60.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Wilfred H.Schoff, op.cit., p.237.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Kautilya, Arthasastra, Book II, Chapter 60.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Griffith's Valmikhi Rāmāyana, Book IV, Chapter 41, p.19.
\item \textsuperscript{50} The Mahābhārata, Vol.23 (ed. Calcutta), Drona, Samsatha, p.21.
\end{itemize}
Kolkāi and in medieval times another nearby place Kāyal (Coil of Marco-Polo) became the port, when Marco-Polo visited the Pandyan country in the 13th century A.D. In course of time, it became a far-off place from sea and was also abandoned. In the 18th century, the trade of this district passed through the port of Thuttukudi (Tuticorin).

EMERGENCE OF THUTTUKUDI

The gulf situated between Sri Lanka and Thuttukudi - Rāmeswaram area, which is now called the Gulf of Mannar, was originally called the Korkai gulf. Many wars were waged here between the Pandya kings and the kings of Sri Lanka in the 13th century A.D., for gaining monopoly over pearl-diving. The pearl banks of this area extended from Kanyakumari to Rāmeswaram island, a distance of over 100 miles. All around this gulf, water has a depth of not more than 10 or 12 fathoms, and in some places not more than 2 fathoms.

51. V.Kanakasabhai Pillai, op.cit., pp.22-23.
52. Imperial Gazetteer, XV, Madras, 1803, p.387.
Pearl-fishing went on during the eight months from October to May. The paars (rocky grounds), as these pearl banks are called, were arranged in three divisions - the northern portion mainly at Kilakarai, extending from Adam's bridge to Vaippār; the central portion at Thuttukudi, from Vaippār to Manappād, and the southern portion at Comorin southwards from Manappād to Kanyakumari. The central division was very productive. The bottom of these paars consists of stretches of continuous coral rocks. The nature of these rocks varies from place to place considerably. They are formed by the consolidation of sand and dead corals. 55 Cilappadikāram speaks of a terrible irruption of the sea which devastated a great tract of country to the south of Kanyakumari. 56 It is believed that a mountain called Kumarikkodū, and a large tract of land watered by the river Pahrulī had existed south of Kanyakumari. During the time of the Pāndyan king Makīrthi alias Nilamtharuthiruvin Pāndyan, the sea destroyed the mountain and submerged the whole of the country. 57 This legend has been corroborated by the

56. V.Kanakasabhai Pillai, op.cit., p.21.
57. K.K.Pillai, First South Indian History Congress-Presidential Address, Madurai, 1981.
report about the presence of large accumulation of oyster shells over-laid by soil at Muttam, about two miles north-east of Kanyakumari. The pearl banks of the Gulf of Mannar had been protected from the South - West monsoon. It has been said that the best sort of pearl is the Indian one and that of the Red Sea. Pearls are also produced in the Western Ocean where the island of Britain is. Pearls produced in the straits of the Bosporus is inferior to those of the British.

In Sri Lanka pearl-fishing took place at Butthale, Arippo, Kondatche, Bettler, Jaffnapatnam and Calpantyn. In the waters of Sri Lanka, pearl banks were situated at a distance of ten miles from the shore and in ten fathoms deep water, and oysters were obtained at a distance of about five miles from the shore and at a depth of five to seven fathoms. The rocky ground was flat - surfaced and largely continuous; the sandy stretches found on and in between the paars were never deep, never

58. Statement made to James Hornell in May 1964 by the Jati Thalaivan from his personal knowledge.


60. John W. Mc Crindle, Ancient India as Described by Megasthenese and Arrian, London, 1887, p.144.

exceeding a depth of 3 inches. The depth of the water over these pearl banks are 6 to 6.5 fathoms. 62

PEARL-FISHING AT VILINGAM

From a reference found in the Kulōttuṅga-Sōlan Pillai-t-tamil it is clear that pearl-fishing operations were being conducted at Kāndalūr in those days.

'tandil Vilina -t- eyil
tahart -t- Udiya mattuch
Chatapa Mulumdum Pōraiyan
Salai -y- odu kōnday' 63

These lines mean that "who with an army destroyed the fort at Vilingam and obtained the entire proceeds of the pearl oysters with the Salai of Pōraiyan i.e. the Chēra".

The fact that pearl-fishing was also conducted even in the West Coast in those days becomes clear from the imperial Chōla invasaion of that region. Rājarāja I, the great Chōla Emperor did not want the pearl-fishing to be conducted on West Coast by the Chēras. It was to be confined only to the East Coast


63. Kulōttuṅga-Sōlan Pillai-t-tamil, verse 91.
to be operated by the Pāṇḍyas. At the same time, it is also
assumed that the vessels used for pearl-fishing might have
interfered with the normal movement of ships meant for trade in
the Arabian sea; which was then infested with sea-pirates. The
word 'Salai' had been used to denote the place 'Kāndalūr Sālai'
which was a place of strategic importance under the Chēras. 64
Perhaps that may be the reason why Rājarāja I invades Vilingam
and Kāndalūr Sālai in 1000 A.D and destroyed them.

LIVING QUARTERS

Paravar or Paratavar of the pearl-fishing coast were the
same Mukkuvar in the Western coast. A variant form of this name
in Tamil is 'Karaiyar' or the coastmen. According to Ptolemy,
this was noted as 'Kareai'. 65 The Paratavar or Mukkuvar were the
very ancient fishing or pearl-fishing men of the coast. 66 The
fishing community as a whole, except a few wealthy men, lived in
huts with thatched roofs. The area of many hutments is called a
Ceri. The term is derived from the root word 'cer' which means

64. T.N.Subrahmanian, *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol.III,

65. V.Kanakasabhai Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.22.

'collect'. It therefore denotes a collection of huts or houses. The Saṅgam literature gives evidence to the Paratavar Čeris. In Maduraik-Kâñchi, the Paratavar Čeri has been referred to as Minvilainar Čeri, which means the 'fishermen quarters of the particular sect', who were engaged in selling the fishes by announcing their price. Cilappadikâram calls this as Valaivalnar Čeri, which means the 'fishermen quarters where that particular sub-sect of fishermen live, and who do the occupation of weaving and spreading nets'. In Narrinai, the fishermen quarters were called Parrarai Punnaiceri, which means the 'quarter surrounded by Punnai (laurel) trees'. Kurunthogai calls their settlement as Pulâlamceri. The foul smell of the fishes caught and dried up in the area had given rise to such a name. The living quarters of the fishermen


69. Cilappadikâram, VII, 10.


specialized in pearl-fishing and conch-cutting were called Mutthukulippavar Ceri and Chaňku-kulippavar Ceri respectively. 72

In Chennai, their living quarters are called Kuppam, which simply means a small village of fishermen. 73 But, in some other pockets, their habitats are known as Pakkam. 74 Kottipakkam, Kalpakkam, Kudapakkam, Cheppakkam may be cited as examples.

Now-a-days, the term Paratavar is very rarely used and that too in certain areas only. In most of the coastal regions it has fallen out of use. It is a fact that the fishermen who live in the districts of Madras, Chengleput, South Arcot and Thanjavur are called Minavar, Pattinavar and Karaiyar. 75 Whereas the fishermen on the sea-shore of the Ramnad and Kanyakumari Districts are called Paravar or Mukkuvar. 76 The term is derived from the root Mukku (Mukkuthal) which means to press under water,

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75. Ibid., p.170.
to immerse, to drown and to dive. This refers to those fishermen who dive for pearls and conch-shells. This indicates that they are the descendants of the pearl-divers of yore.

The location of the pearl-fishery in the Pāndya Coast, especially in the Gulf of Mān̄ar, opposite to the Pearl-fishery in Sri Lānka, was very much conducive for the Paratavar to engage themselves in the occupation of pearl-fishing. The pearl-fishery of the Pāndya Coast or the Parava Coast extended from Ramnād to Kanyākumāri. In this coastal belt about twenty seven villages were known for their pearl-fishing occupation. This occupation assured the economic prosperity and external contacts of the Pāndyas. It had helped the Pāndyas develop inter-continental trade and cultural contacts. It is an accepted fact that location is very important for any occupation or industry to flourish. For pearl-fishing and pearl-trade, the location of these fisheries in the Gulf of Mān̄ar was of very great importance. This offered the favourable environment and opportunity to the Paravas to choose this profession.